



The Border Crossed Us

For thousands of years, the Tohono O’odham people lived on land with no borders. But then, Mexico and the U.S. fought over our territory. They put a border through our land. That’s why we say, “The border crossed us; we didn’t cross the border.”¹

When Trump became president, he started building a bigger wall on the border. My people don’t even have a word for wall. Yet now we have a huge wall cutting through our land. This border wall divides families. It kills plants and animals. It hurts the land. It cuts us off from our water. The land belongs to plants and animals. We are all part of this earth together. We depend on one another. If one is destroyed, the rest will suffer. Verlon Jose, a leader of our nation, says that having the wall on our land is like being cut in half.²

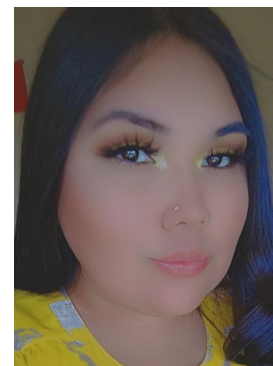
We Stand Together

How should we respond? We must stand together. We must protect the land, water, plants, animals, people, and traditions. Amy Juan, a member of the O’odham Nation, told me, “We have lived on these lands before America and Mexico were created. Both sides of the border are home. We will continue to move across borders. We are caretakers of our land and our way of life.”³

AFTER YOU READ: According to the author, why is the border wall a problem for the O’odham people?

Sources: 1. Shannon Rivers, Civil Dialogue Series, “The People’s History: An O’Otham Perspective,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roMEIEC83IU>. 2. Verlon Jose, Vice Chairman for the Tohono O’odham is interviewed by Arizona Public Radio, We Are the Water Missing Home, <https://youtu.be/jAhNqoFPanY>; 3. Amy Juan, interview with Raven Lewis on April 9, 2020.

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* Two versions of this article are available: [advanced intermediate \(pp. 36-38\)](#) and [advanced beginner \(p. 39\)](#).